

WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Congressman Mike Pence gave the following speech on the House floor today in favor of the Fiscal Year 2009 War Supplemental Appropriations Bill:

"I rise today in support of the military funding in H.R. 2356, the FY 2009 War Supplemental Appropriations Bill. It will provide nearly \$85 billion to support our men and women serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, those who every day make the sacrifices necessary to ensure our freedom and that of our posterity. Overall this legislation does reflect a bipartisan effort to provide necessary war funding and essential support for our men and women in uniform.

I am particularly pleased that it does so without arbitrary benchmarks and timetables for withdrawal that have been so much the debate of war supplementals in recent years in this Congress. I'm also pleased that none of the funding requested by the Administration related to Guantanamo Bay has been included. I take this opportunity to thank the distinguished chairman of this committee for his judgment and discretion in leaving out any funding for the purpose of closing Guantanamo Bay.

"President Obama was simply wrong to announce plans to close Guantanamo Bay without any plan for what to do with the dangerous terrorist detainees who remain there to this day. The American people deserve to know that this Congress and this government are putting their safety and their interests above world opinion in decisions about terrorist detainees. This legislation, in failing to provide funding for closing Guantanamo Bay, puts the interest and security of the American people first. I do regret that the amendment authored by the gentleman from Virginia who just spoke, Mr. Wolf, was not included in this legislation, an amendment that would have prohibited the transfer of any terrorist detainee during the next calendar year, and I hope for additional language in the conference report.

"Now while I support this war funding bill, let me say on the floor of this Congress I believe a war supplemental bill ought to be about war funding, and war funding alone. It should not include the literally billions of dollars in non-defense related spending.

"And Mr. Speaker, I don't have any particular objection to Congress considering and debating spending money on international food assistance or the State Department or the staff at the NSC or wildfire or avian flu or police radios. But what are they doing in a war supplemental bill? At a time when Washington, D.C. appears to most Americans to be a gusher of red ink, runaway federal spending, stimulus bills, omnibus bills, and this Congress passed a budget that will double our national debt in five years and triple it in ten, we can't even seem to bring a war supplemental bill that just funds the needs of our soldiers in harm's way. I believe we can do better. I'll support this bill because I support our troops, but I'll continue to call for this Congress to do a service for those heroes and future generations by practicing fiscal discipline and reform."